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ABSTRACT

Evaluation can serve a variety of educational management questions, but an administrator's ability to use evaluation as a management tool depends not only upon his or her own perception of evaluation but also on the perceptions of other potential evaluation users in the system. Research has uncovered a variety of factors influencing an evaluation's use potential. These factors reflect human considerations, such as people's attitudes toward and expectations for the evaluation; context considerations, such as an evaluation's requirements within a particular setting; and evaluation considerations, such as procedures used and means of communicating information. The research demonstrates that an evaluation's use potential, and therefore its application as a management tool, can be greatly enhanced if someone takes responsibility for organizing the evaluation to meet specified needs, for particular users, in light of the factors operating in the given setting. The research also suggests that a program-level administrator is in the most strategic position to assume this responsibility. When a program evaluation is being considered, therefore, the administrator needs to decide on its various audiences, determine their questions and information needs, and anticipate the uses they are likely to make of the information. (BW)

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THE ADMINISTRATOR'S ROLE IN EVALUATION USE*

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this journal issue -- evaluation as a management tool in education -- is both critical and timely. It is critical because, "as the shift continues from the federal to the state levels in the management of education programs, the states become more, not less accountable for them. SEAs and LEAs have become accustomed to the federal government not only requiring the evaluation of programs but also dictating methods of evaluation" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1982). As federal control of evaluation diminishes, and as federal resources for these evaluations also diminish, it seems likely that state and local administrators will need to assume greater responsibility for their evaluations (Burry, 1984). Given scarce resources, they will need to think strongly about the best ways to commit people and money to ensure that their evaluations generate useful information. One primary index of that usefulness will derive from the extent to which evaluation becomes a tool for educational management and decision making.

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The criticality of the issue is also matched by its timeliness. That is, to suggest increased administrator responsibility in evaluation without offering means to channel that responsibility would be less than satisfactory. Fortunately, recent research in evaluation use (Alkin et al, 1985 in press) has enabled us to develop a framework which helps administrators to take a more active, indeed proactive role, in organizing evaluations to increase their effectiveness as a management tool in educational decision making.

Recent attention to the quality of education in our schools (Boyer, 1983: Goodlad, 1983; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) indicates that concern with excellence is pervasive. That pervasiveness suggests that educational decision makers will need information which accurately reflects the extent to which their educational systems are responding to the challenge for excellence. Can evaluation become a useful tool in the management of these systems? We believe that it can, if educational administrators take the kind of actions we discuss here to capitalize on the uses to which evaluation can be put and to ensure that these uses reflect their own system-level questions and needs.

Establishing a local focus for evaluation presents little in the way of technical difficulties but may run counter to present attitudes toward and expectations for evaluation. We will elaborate some of the relevant issues later in our discussion. Suffice it to say, for the present, that if evaluation is to address the demonstration of excellence (or any other desirable quality) then there should be open discussion of issues such as the definition of excellence, how it is to be judged, the best means of

demonstrating its attainment, and the uses of evaluation in addressing these issues.

Burstein (1984) has recently discussed some applications of evaluation in school improvement efforts. While these applications can play a potentially central role in the definition, judgment, and demonstration of excellence, that potential will not be realized until administrators come to recognize the ways in which evaluation information can be used for management purposes. Among these purposes are: pulse monitoring -- treating evaluation information as educational indicators of the extent to which the educational system is moving in the desired direction; student decision making -- using evaluation information to make accurate decisions about student progress and needs; program decision making -- drawing on evaluation information to monitor programs and services and to modify them as needed; informing educational policy -- using evaluation information to guide discussion of the status of educational systems and mechanisms for improvement; and long-range planning -- applying evaluation information in decision areas such as physical plant needs, teacher hiring and assignment, and resource allocation (Burstein, 1984, pp. 16-19).

As Burstein suggests, however, such management applications, which address instructional issues, support systems, and resource allocation at both policy and operational levels, face certain requirements. Among these requirements are commitment to the uses of evaluation information for "informed inquiry and educational change," and "a healthy and informed understanding of the limits as well as the possibilities of information-based decision making" (Burstein, 1984, p. 23). We will amplify these and other requirements as we proceed.

Enabling educational administrators to organize their evaluations to meet the uses outlined above, then, is the topic of our discussion. Recent research (Alkin et al, 1985 in press) has uncovered factors which influence the extent to which evaluation is likely to be put to use. One finding, as we shall see, is that the educational administrator, him- or herself, is a critical factor in the use process. That is, the extent to which the administrator actively influences the direction and course of the evaluation is a principal determinant of the likelihood that it will be put to use. Other research (Ruskus & Alkin, 1984) suggests the kind of administrative influence likely to promote system-wide use. Recognizing and promoting the uses to which evaluation can be put is the first step in establishing its application as a management tool.

Once accepted as a management tool, evaluation can provide a valuable resource for administrators who are interested in finding out how well the system they are responsible for is running, and deciding whether it could be improved. We have suggested that these decision needs can involve, for example, monitoring student and program decision making, policy setting, and long-range planning. To meet these kinds of needs, an evaluation should be planned around questions reflecting the system's context, operations, and expectations. It must be conducted in ways to ensure, first, that these questions are answered and, second, that the answers can actually be put to use in making decisions about whether the system should continue to run as is, if it needs to be modified, what these modifications might entail, and what kinds of policies and resources might be required either for maintenance or modification.

Although there are potential obstacles facing the administrator who wants an evaluation emphasizing such practical uses, there are also organizing principles that can be applied to overcome these obstacles. As we discuss the administrator's role in organizing an evaluation we will suggest ways to strengthen its potential for use. For purposes of discussion, we focus our remarks primarily at the level of a discrete education program such as, for example, Chapter I, bilingual education, mathematics, language arts.

Organizing for Evaluation Use

To have a high potential for use, an evaluation needs to be carefully planned, organized, conducted, and communicated to likely users of the information it provides. This kind of evaluation rarely happens by chance; someone has to take the responsibility to make it happen. Certainly, an evaluator can and should take some of the responsibility for organizing an evaluation for use. However, it has become clear that the role an administrator (e.g., a superintendent; a Chapter I program director) takes with regard to the evaluation has a marked effect on its use potential. We will demonstrate a framework, then, that administrators, working in cooperation with their evaluators, can apply to gain tactical influence over the direction the evaluation takes. That influence is intended to increase the evaluation's potential for use in program management and decision making.

Evaluation Purpose

The framework we propose reflects a particular evaluation perspective. That is, we define evaluation as a means of providing information that can be used to make decisions about programs. These decisions might

stem from questions about whether the program could be improved, they might reflect matters of resource allocation and monitoring, they might stem from questions about whether the kinds of attitudes people have about the program could be improved.

Using evaluation information to assess and perhaps influence participant attitude is likely to make an important contribution to evaluation's potential as a management tool. Some programmatic changes will require modification of participants' attitudes about the program or its evaluation before the change can be implemented successfully. That is, an information-based administrative decision to make some curricular change, to redirect resources, to reassign staff, will require staff support of the proposed change.

That support will require acceptance of the information driving the change, and frequently use of that information by the people who, in addition to the administrator, will play some role in accepting and implementing the change. Therefore, administrator ability to successfully use evaluation as a management tool will require collegial support and information use at various system levels.

For an evaluation to meet its potential as a management tool in a particular decision area, then, the administrator needs to identify other potential information users whose support of the decision is necessary. For each user or user group, the administrator will need to determine what questions and concerns they have with respect to the given decision area, and then make sure that the evaluation applies procedures and reporting techniques which are appropriate to the users and their questions.

The extent to which a program administrator takes responsibility for identifying the intended users, determining their questions about the program, shaping the evaluation procedures for answering the questions, deciding what kinds of information will be collected, and ensuring that the information is effectively communicated can profoundly affect the degree to which the information can successfully be put to use.

Evaluation Use

By use we mean applying evaluation information to the resolution of the kinds of problems, questions, or concerns we have alluded to above. To be sure, evaluation can have other, perhaps unintended consequences, but we do not emphasize them in this paper.

There are many potential users of evaluation information. In a school setting, for example, there might be a variety of programs in operation, such as: a Chapter I program; a state-funded bilingual program; a remedial math or language arts program designed for students in need of specialized instruction.

Each of these programs might be evaluated and each could have a variety of potential evaluation users. For example, let's assume that a district superintendent wanted to have more productive evaluations, wanted to be able to use evaluation information as a management tool in district operations. The administrator might then consider ways to organize the evaluation to meet his or her questions and needs and those of other potential users. These users, in addition to the superintendent, might include the people responsible for program operation, for instance, such as the director, other administrators, curriculum developers, instructional

staff, and funding agencies. Other users might consist of parents, advisory councils, and community organizations with an interest in the program. Since each of these groups can have professional and personal interests in the program and its evaluation, each is a potential user of the information it provides. A central concern in organizing for evaluation use, therefore, is the selection of the intended users of the evaluation.

Evaluation information can be used in a variety of ways. For example, let's follow the case suggested above and assume that the superintendent is concerned about the instructional content and methods used in a remedial mathematics program. As a responsible manager, the superintendent has questions about how students are selected for the program, the extent to which teachers are implementing the program as planned, the extent to which building principals support teachers as they attempt to implement the program, the extent to which resources earmarked for the program are actually used in the program, whether or not the program seems to be beneficial for the students. The superintendent wants the program's evaluation to provide answers to these questions so that he or she can make information-based decisions about maintaining the program as is, modifying the program, maintaining, increasing, or reducing its level of resources.

Now the evaluation may ultimately find that the program seems to be running quite well. On the other hand, it may pinpoint problems and suggest areas for change. Regardless of the evaluation findings, staff in the program are likely to have different conceptions about the program. Some may enjoy working in the program, think it's a good one, and would

like to see it being continued; other staff may take the opposite point of view. Staff are also likely to differ in their expectations for the evaluation. Some may want information to help them as they carry out their responsibilities in the program; others may think that evaluation does not provide the kinds of information they need; some may have no expectations for the evaluation.

In short, program staff, as potential implementers of the superintendent's decisions, are potential evaluation information users. They can differ in the extent to which they have questions about the program, in the kinds of questions they have, and their disposition toward using evaluative answers. For some staff, asking them to make changes may create a problem for the superintendent; for others, asking them to continue current practice may create a problem.

To help preclude these possibilities and to promote the kind of support we mentioned earlier, involving staff and other potential users in the evaluation, finding out their questions and concerns, and determining the kinds of information they are likely to accept and use, are crucial.

Factors Affecting Use

In any setting, there are many factors that can have an effect on evaluation use and therefore on its potential as a management tool. By factor, we have in mind any characteristic or element present in a given situation that can affect the extent to which the evaluation is used. These factors stem not only from the conduct of the evaluation, but also from the surrounding social, political, organizational, administrative, and programmatic context. Factors potentially affecting an evaluation's use,

for example, include the kind of role the evaluator chooses, the intended users' views about the program being evaluated, the various requirements for the evaluation, and its proposed methods.

If these factors are accepted as givens, they can reduce or negate the evaluation's use potential. For instance, if an intended group of users firmly believes that a program could not possibly be improved upon, it may be difficult to convince them to modify their view, no matter what the evaluation findings might reveal. On the other hand, if the evaluation is structured and organized around intended users and kinds of uses, and if the possible effects of various factors on the use potential are planned for, then the evaluation's likelihood for use can be greatly increased.

Later we will describe the full range of factors that have been shown to affect an evaluation's use and discuss an organizing framework administrators can follow to minimize negative factor influence and strengthen positive factor influence. The organizing framework, as well as the associated operating terms we have discussed above, grew out of our research on use over the past several years (Alkin et al, 1985 in press; Burry, 1983).

BACKGROUND ON EVALUATION USE

For a good number of years, the terms use or utilization have been cropping up in the evaluation literature. Up to about the mid 1970's, however, discussions of use relied fairly heavily on impressionistic and anecdotal information. There was a lot of talk reflecting what people thought use looked like, with explanations often relying on speculation (Rossi, 1972; Mann, 1972; Cohen & Garet, 1975).

Around the mid 1970's the picture began to change. Then we began to see the results of systematic research on use, research trying to discover what use actually means, whether or not it occurs, and what works for it or against it (Alkin, 1975; Patton et al, 1975).

To a great extent, the careful study of use grew out of the kinds of promises made for evaluation. For example, evaluation was to be an important tool for decision making and for improving policy and practice. All the evaluator had to do, it was thought, was to provide valid data. People would see the light and use the information provided; decision making would be more rational and policy and practice would improve.

By now we know this was a naive view. Certainly, information validity, especially when that term is mutually agreed upon by evaluator and potential user, can contribute to use. But so long as evaluation and its use were (1) seen as the sole responsibility of the evaluator, and (2) expected to produce quick, observable, and rational decisions in action, the promise was not met.

One of the things explaining the seeming lack of use was that for a long time many people thought that information received was necessarily put to use, and put to use quickly. When that did not bear up in practice, it was assumed that no use was taking place.

As the research was to show, however, use was occurring, though in a form quite different from and perhaps more modest than had been expected (Alkin et al, 1974; Patton et al, 1975). We began to understand that evaluation processes and evaluation information usually accumulate over time before they are finally put to use. And even when they are used in

making a decision, that decision may also have been influenced by other kinds of information and forces outside of the evaluation. This kind of use can and does take place and when it does it can help to improve educational decision making and practice.

However, there is something else that helps explain lack of use. That is, for use to take place, we had thought, such technical factors as the quality of the evaluation's procedures would be important. And that is true. Procedural soundness can certainly contribute to use, but so can other factors, factors that are somewhat removed from the technical realm.

For example, one early CSE finding (Alkin, 1975) showed that the stance taken by the evaluator with respect to a program's social context can affect the evaluation's use potential. Concurrent research (Patton et al, 1975) pointed up the contribution to use of the "personal factor" which is typified, for instance, when someone takes direct responsibility for trying to make use happen.

Until recently, that "someone" was usually taken to be the evaluator, the "provider" of information. Our research, however, as it has amplified the "personal factor" and discovered others contributing to use, demonstrates that the role of the potential "user" of information, such as an administrator, is just as important as that of the evaluator in promoting use. In many situations the evaluator him- or herself will lack the power, prestige, political sensitivity, or contextual understanding necessary to promote use. Our work has shown that use will frequently require the influence of a program administrator who does possess these and other attributes.

CSE Research on Use

Drawing on the early studies mentioned above (Alkin, 1975; Patton et al, 1975), we conducted several empirical studies of evaluation use. Among these were: (1) evaluation case studies; (2) an evaluator field study; and (3) a user survey. These studies contributed to our synthesis of the knowledge on use and led to a practical handbook for administrators who wish to organize their program evaluations for use.

The evaluation case studies: The case studies (Alkin, Daillak, & White, 1979) focused, over a period of two years, on five different programs with required evaluations. These cases provided detailed descriptions of school-level program implementation and evaluation, and how the evaluation process unfolded in each program. Our analyses uncovered the people who shaped the evaluation process, how it was used in each case, how it fitted in with other school operations, and how it influenced decisions about the program. Further, by identifying some of the factors promoting these uses, we were able to develop a conceptual framework to guide our future study of use.

The evaluator field study: Drawing on the emerging framework, Daillak (1980) spent a year as a participant-observer working closely with three school-district program evaluators in the belief that observation and analyses of evaluators -- the providers of information -- at work would illuminate conditions of use. By observing these evaluators at work Daillak was able to elaborate some of our previously identified factors, particularly those reflecting the evaluation's organizational setting, as well as the kinds of tactics that evaluators adopted to increase their use-enhancing effect.

The user survey: The user survey (Stecher, Alkin, & Flesher, 1981) took place over the course of a year in 22 schools in the district in which the field study had previously been conducted. Our concern here was to characterize the role of a particular information user, the program administrator, in terms of the nature of the decisions typically confronting administrators, and to uncover how and what kinds of information come to shape these decisions.

The interviews provided a picture of the kinds of decisions -- programmatic and other -- school administrators need to make to do their jobs, the ways that they use evaluation and other information -- to pinpoint a need, to amplify a previous conclusion -- as they form these decisions, and the broad strategies they adopt to stimulate others to use information in their programmatic responsibilites.

Synthesis and handbook: To help synthesize the knowledge on use we developed an annotated review of the relevant empirical and conceptual-theoretical literature, drawn from educational and other settings, (Burry, 1983), and a handbook for the administrator-user who plans to build use into his or her program evaluation (Alkin et al, 1985 in press). All of our work to this point illustrated the importance of user-evaluator collaboration in promoting use given various factor impacts. The handbook therefore clusters factors into patterns which reflect the stages of the use process and which can be influenced to promote use.

Factors Affecting Evaluation Use

On the basis of the work described above, we identified and classified the individual factors affecting evaluation use into three related cate-

gories -- human, context, and evaluation procedure or methodology. How these factors interact together determines the extent to which evaluation is likely to be used.

Figure 1 lists the three kinds of factors. Those in the human category reflect evaluator and user characteristics that have a strong influence on use. Included here are such factors as people's attitude toward and interest in the program and its evaluation, their backgrounds and organizational positions, and their professional styles.

Context factors include the kinds of requirements and fiscal constraints the evaluation faces, and the relationships between the program being evaluated and other segments of its larger organization and surrounding community.

The evaluation factors refer to the actual conduct of the evaluation, and include how the evaluator and users work together, the procedures used in the evaluation, and the quality of the information it provides.

The factors in each of the three groups have a demonstrated importance to use, and many of them will require administrative influence to promote use. In the next section of the article, therefore, we offer a series of observations drawn from the empirical studies of use. These observations help define each of the factors in Figure 1 and suggest the kinds of influence they may have, as a precursor to discussion of factor interaction patterns and administrative organizing to promote use as a management tool.

Observations Drawn from Empirical Studies

With respect to the human factors affecting use, an evaluation's use potential is likely to increase to the extent that:

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Figure 1: Factors Affecting Use

I. Human Factors

A. Evaluator Characteristics

1. commitment to use
2. willingness to involve users
3. choice of role
4. rapport with users
5. political sensitivity
6. credibility
7. background and identity
   a. gender
   b. title

B. User Characteristics

1. identity
   a. range of potential users
   b. organizational positions
   c. professional experience levels
2. interest in the evaluation
   a. views about the project being evaluated
   b. expectations for the evaluation
   c. predisposition toward the evaluation
   d. perceived need
   e. perceived risks
3. commitment to use
4. professional style
   a. administrative and organizational skills
   b. initiative
   c. openness to new ideas or change
5. information processing
   a. preferences for particular forms
   b. how information is processed

II. Context Factors

A. Pre-existing Evaluation Bounds

1. written requirements
2. other contractual obligations
3. fiscal constraints

B. Organizational Features

1. intraorganizational
   a. role of central/district office
   b. interrelationship between unit and central/district administration
   c. institutional arrangements
   d. unit level autonomy
   e. sources of information beyond evaluation likely to be in use
   f. perceived institutional risk
2. external features
   a. community climate
   b. community influence
   c. role of other agencies

C. Project Characteristics

1. age/maturity
2. innovativeness
3. overlap with other projects

III. Evaluation Factors

A. Evaluation Procedures

1. methods used
   a. appropriateness
   b. rigor
2. dealing with mandated tasks
3. used of a general model

B. Information Dialogue

1. amount and quality of interaction between evaluator and users

C. Substance of Evaluation Information

1. information relevance
2. information specificity

D. Evaluation Reporting

1. frequency of information provided
2. timing of information
3. format of presentations
   a. oral presentations
   b. written reports
   c. statistical and narrative data

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1. The evaluator --

   - is personally committed to seeing his or her work put to use, and actively makes efforts to facilitate the use of information;
   - is willing to involve users in the evaluation through cooperative planning and conduct of the evaluation and its uses;
   - recognizes that alternative evaluation roles exist, chooses a role that is appropriate in the given setting, and focuses on serving program needs and questions in addition to any external requirements;
   - develops rapport with users by earning their trust in an atmosphere of harmony and agreement;
   - is politically sensitive to the program and understands the relationship among formal and informal power sources, opinion makers, decision making processes, and the function of evaluation as one of the inputs to these processes;
   - establishes credibility in terms of technical competence and personal and professional manner.

2. The users --

   - are clearly identified so that the evaluator understands the range of organizational positions and professional experience levels -- administrative vs. operational, sole or shared decision-making authority, familiarity with evaluation -- which are represented among the users and which bear on their potential for using
   - view the project in such ways that they would be willing to modify these views, if warranted;
   - have specific expectations for the evaluation -- determining the program's efficiency, understanding its processes, assessing its outcomes -- which are translated into questions and concerns that the evaluation will address;
   - are predisposed to accepting the evaluation's findings, which may be because they
   - have a high perceived need for evaluative answers to their questions, and
   - perceive the risks of the evaluation as outweighed by the potential benefits. In addition, they

- are personally committed to using evaluation information as their questions and concerns are answered, and
- have sufficient administrative and organizational skills to act on information, to get things done. They will
- take the initiative to use evaluation information in their own area of responsibility and, if necessary, to stimulate others to follow their example. Further, they
- are open to new ideas or change that stem from the findings, even if these findings suggest they need to modify their original views of the project. And, as the evaluation process unfolds, their positive interest in the evaluation remains high, because they
- ask for and receive the kinds of information they prefer to use -- narrative, descriptive, or some combination, through the kinds of processes -- oral reports, written reports, detailed or summary treatments, they are most comfortable or routinely familiar with.

With respect to the context factors affecting use, an evaluation's use potential is likely to increase to the extent that:

1. The pre-existing evaluation bounds --
   - are characterized by a guided harmony rather than by conflict and tension. The evaluation's written requirements -- legal codes, federal/state requirements -- permit sufficient flexibility so that the evaluator can respond to such other contractual requirements as those set by program administrators or operators.
2. The organizational features --
   - are marked by amicable co-existence in an atmosphere stressing discussion and the negotiation of problems and needs;
   - facilitate the central/district office -- often the evaluation sponsor -- role in balancing broad system concerns with those of the individual units, such as the schools who are subject to evaluation;
   - permit sufficient unit level autonomy so that unit (e.g., a school) questions receive a fair share of the evaluator's attention as he or she addresses a variety of broad organizational and unit questions of interest;
   - promote frank discussion of the perceived institutional risks and, where there is a question of whether the evaluation benefits will outweigh the risks, consider the possible outcomes and resultant actions the organization might take;

- are free from undue or negative influence from the surrounding community or other agencies.

3. Program characteristics --

- are clearly defined on such dimensions as age/maturity, innovativeness, and overlap with other programs because these characteristics have a bearing on the kinds of procedures the evaluator should select and the kinds of information he or she should provide in order to stimulate use.

With respect to the evaluation factors affecting use, the use potential is likely to increase to the extent that:

1. The evaluation procedures --

- are appropriate to the particular project. A selected procedure must be appropriate as a method for addressing the given question, and also appropriate in the context of the project;

- address the matter of rigor from the dual standpoint of accepted standards of evaluation practice and the users' conception of what constitutes rigor;

- deal with mandated tasks -- funding agency requirements, central office needs, unit level questions -- in a balanced manner so that no single point of view is seen to dominate;

- reflect the viewpoint that no single evaluation model is inherently superior; instead, evaluation is seen as a tool for decision making and the selection of evaluation procedures is guided by the decision-making process.

2. Information dialogue --

- reflects purposeful, guided sharing of ideas between evaluator and users;

- is ongoing, in sufficient amounts to stimulate or maintain user interest in the evaluation, with quality growing out of collegiality and reciprocity.

3. Evaluation substance --

- is relevant from the users' standpoint because it constitutes pertinent answers to the questions they have raised; and

- is specific by focusing its content on the needs and interests of the particular user or user group.

4. Evaluation reporting --

- is marked by frequent and well-focused provision of information;
- is timely in that it reflects program chronology and meshes with important events stemming from the program's decision needs;
- uses whatever variety of presentation formats -- oral, written, statistical/narrative, formal or informal -- that is appropriate to the range of users and their evaluation interests.

Factor Interactions

The preceding observations begin to suggest that factors are likely to interact to affect use. Here we will discuss a few possible interaction patterns to illustrate the kinds of phenomena the administrator might need to consider as he or she organizes the evaluation for use, primarily because many of the factors are beyond the evaluator's control.

For example, to help promote program-level use, the evaluator should address questions relevant to the program, questions of interest to program staff. The extent to which the evaluator is successful will depend, in part, on the various requirements for the evaluation, such as those set by a funding agency, and whether any particular requirement is allowed to dominate. But it will also depend on users' interest in the evaluation and their commitment to applying its findings. However, users' predisposition to make this application can be affected by perceived institutional risk, pressures from the program's community, and the timing at which reports are provided, to mention but a few of the possibilities.

Many of the factors and interactions suggested above may not be amenable to evaluator influence. For example, while the evaluator may commit him- or herself to use, the associated user commitment, which also contributes to the application of results, is properly in the administrator's sphere of influence.

In short, to the extent that the factors mentioned above are subject to influence in a given setting, many are in the administrator's domain and are therefore perhaps more amenable to his or her influence. And this influence, if necessary, can cut across all three factor categories, not only the context/organizational category traditionally associated with administrative responsibility.

We suggested earlier that to be able to use evaluation as a management tool, as a decision-making tool, it is critical that those people who may be affected by a particular deision be involved in the decision-making process. What do the kinds of interactions noted above, then, suggest for the administrator-organizer trying to increase an evaluation's potential as a management tool?

First of all, by very virtue of his or her entry into the use process, the administrator becomes one of the factors influencing use. Continuing CSE research on factors promoting high evaluation utilization has suggested kinds of evaluator behavior which promote use. These behaviors offer clues to the kind of overall demeanor that the administrator-organizer might adopt, first of all, to create an <u>atmosphere</u> conducive to evaluation use.

We recently analyzed several evaluations whose high utilization levels were documented as part of an AERA award to recognize such evaluations (Ruskus & Alkin, 1984). Many of the factors cited tended to confirm those displayed in Figure 1. Five of these factors, each of which was cited as a use-promoting characteristic, suggest how professional style can have a bearing on use. These five factors are level of effort, leadership behavior, user involvement in the evaluation, involvement in implementing recommendations, and commitment to use.

Evaluation users frequently cited the high levels of evaluator effort that contributed to their use of results. From the standpoint of the equity theory of motivation (Adams, 1965; Weick, 1966) it seems likely that when level of evaluator effort is deemed to be high, users demonstrate high utilization.

Leadership was another factor cited as contributing to evaluation use. Social psychologists such as Likert (1961) and Stogdill (1974) suggest that leadership may be seen as originating new ideas; mixing with other participants; acting on behalf of other participants; reducing conflicts; organizing; communicating; recognizing participants' efforts; stimulating participants to achieve; and helping them carry out their duties.

Involving the potential users was another frequently cited factor in the highly utilized evaluations studied. Beyond the idea that users are likely to use information when they play a part in generating the information, participant management theory (Likert, 1967) suggests that supportive relationships, group decision-making, and shared organizational objectives contribute to commitment to carrying out organizational policy and decisions.

Evaluator involvement in implementing recommendations also played a role in the highly utilized evaluations. Such behavior, taking place after the report was generated, can run the gamut from interpreting implications of a recommendation to making concrete suggestions about areas in need of improvement and possible means of promoting such improvement. In this vein, sociological theory on the management of change (e.g., Keen & Scott

Morton, 1978) suggests that evaluation needs to be concerned with introducing the need for change, striking out in the direction of change, and integrating the change into existing frameworks.

User commitment to use, finally, seemed important in all the highly utilized evaluations. On the basis of themes identified in the marketing literature (e.g., Rogers, 1962), the users in the evaluations studied can be typified as "early adopters" who were (or became) highly disposed to try out new ideas.

Now, in several important ways, the administrator trying to promote evaluation use is assuming evaluation-like responsibilities. To the extent that such is the case, then administrator efforts in promoting use, in providing leadership to other potential users and involving them in the evaluation and in implementing its recommendations, will help to stimulate their commitment to use. That commitment, however, is likely to be short-lived unless the evaluation, or at least part of the evaluation effort, is focused on user concerns.

Establishing a User Focus

Previously we outlined some functions of evaluation that would enhance its relevance and use as a management tool. We have suggested that, to the extent an evaluation is to serve multiple audiences -- funding source, program director and staff -- then the needs of these various audiences need to be recognized and kept in proper balance. To be used as a management tool at the local system level at which the evaluation is conducted, the evaluation must be organized so that, in addition to satisfying any other requirements, it identifies, addresses, and answers local-level questions.

We mentioned earlier that while establishing a local focus presents few technical difficulties, it may encounter some attitudinal barriers reflecting conflicting sets of evaluation expectations. For example, let's resume the case of the superintendent responding to the issue of excellence in education. What problems might he or she encounter in attempting to establish local needs as one of the foci of the evaluation? In attempting to get evaluation information that has local management relevance?

Consider the kinds of management concerns we alluded to earlier (Burstein, 1984). In terms of drawing upon evaluation to provide indicators of progress, who is to decide what these indicators are to be? Are there conflicting viewpoints? Can they be reconciled? Can they legitimately differ in various settings?

In regard to making decisions about students, what kinds of decisions are to be made? Are decision needs -- such as comparison versus individual diagnosis -- in competition? Is one kind of measure deemed superior to another? Is that viewpoint based in fact or does it grow from tradition?

With respect to program decision making, does the evaluation have to address multiple audiences? Are there potential conflicts between them? Can the evaluation reconcile external accountability concerns and local concerns about program monitoring and improvement?

With respect to other possible management applications of evaluation -- long-range planning and policy formulation -- it is unlikely that evaluation can, or should, be used at the local level unless it first has local relevance on the other three issues outlined above. Can evaluation come to have that local relevance?

While the reduction in federal control of evaluation that we alluded to earlier is intended to increase local -- SEA and LEA -- responsibility, can we assume that the federal intention is accepted at these levels? Further, can we assume that SEAs and LEAs responding to the possibility of assuming greater control of their evaluations will be in agreement on basic issues such as evaluation purposes, emphases, and procedures? If not, will one point of view dominate and thus reduce the evaluation's relevance for the other? What are some of the issues confronting our school district superintendent who wants to make sure the evaluation will serve his or her management and decision concerns?

One primary issue, as we have already suggested, is that the evaluator's ability to focus on one set of needs may be constrained by other factors in the setting. It may be that one set of needs, requirements, or dominant attitudes causes the evaluator to adopt a certain role and collect certain kinds of information which, in turn, may cause the superintendent, and his or her colleagues, to view the evaluator and the evaluator's work with something less than enthusiasm. We believe that the current situation with respect to evaluation foci requires the superintendent's attention.

First, some of the superintendent's potential evaluation users may not be convinced that changes in federal requirements will actually reduce external supervision and control. That is, while federal supervision may decrease, the state may continue or initiate, or be perceived by LEAs to be continuing or initiating, policies which offset LEA attempts to direct their evaluations toward LEA matters.

Second, some of the superintendent's potential evaluation users may be so thoroughly immersed in the business of administering a previously required test, perhaps a commercially published, norm-referenced test, that they are unresponsive to the possibility of developing a more locally relevant test, perhaps a criterion-referenced test of a particular content area.

Third, decreased federal control is accompanied by decreased federal funds, and with reductions in resources, local school districts may be unable to supply sufficient evaluation expertise across the various content areas they either need to, or would like to, evaluate. An evaluator may need to take responsibility for simultaneous evaluations of Chapter 1 and 2 programs and of other programs such as bilingual education.

Related to the above issues is the emphasis on technical procedures that still exist in the regulations accompanying some programs. This potential problem area, though it is of particular concern in bilingual programs, is seen to some extent in the "sustained effect" provision in the Chapter 1 regulations. Coupled with dwindling local resources and evaluation expertise thinly stretched, a school district facing multiple program evaluation needs of a technical nature may find it difficult to comply.

Further, the "objective measures" mentioned in the Chapter 1 requirements may not be uniformly understood. Owing to historical precedent, the evaluator of an LEA program may believe that a test must be norm-referenced in order to be considered objective and may continue to use this kind of test even when it serves no relevant local purpose. If this is the case,

the evaluation results are likely to be seen by program staff as having little practical value for them.

In another LEA, also concerned with the matter of objectivity, the pros and cons of various kinds of tests may be discussed at length without ever resolving the matter to the satisfaction of all potential users. So much time may be spent on the debate over the test question that the evaluator has little time left for planning and conducting an evaluation around more important issues.

In districts meeting the kinds of problems outlined above, that is, where testing issues are difficult to resolve, where there is limited expertise to balance technical adequacy and local relevance, there is likely to be some negative effect on factors promoting use: anxieties and sense of risk may dominate; program staff may believe their questions and concerns are receiving insufficient attention; the evaluator's credibility is likely to suffer; commitment to evaluation use and perception of usefulness will decrease.

Problems such as those outlined here do appear to warrant the attention of the superintendent in the case we are using for illustration. For example, we found in a recent exploratory study (Burry, 1984) of directors and staff members of school district research and evaluation units a general agreement concerning the kinds of problem areas described above.

For example, there was a general concern about the force of historical precedent. Because of earlier state and district preferences (which grew out of earlier federal emphases), district evaluators were still required to administer norm-referenced tests for reporting purposes. But informa-

tion produced by such tests was of limited use to them in carrying out their responsibilities. Further, the evaluators also agreed that these tests did not address teachers' interests or provide the kinds of information needed to monitor and adjust classroom instruction. Most evaluators felt that a good deal of their limited time and resources were given over to generating information which was state required in response to Chapter 1 regulations.

A few districts were trying to distill some locally-useful information from a norm-referenced test. But the evaluators felt that too much time was involved in having the tests scored and then returned for analysis and interpretation so that they would be of some use to curriculum specialists and classroom teachers. Consequently, these efforts detracted from the time they needed to generate information more specific to instructional needs.

Several districts, in addition to administering and reporting the results of a norm-referenced test, used district-developed objectives-based measures and/or the tests accompanying curriculum materials. (See Burry, et al, 1982, for a discussion of how widespread this practice is, as well as some of its implications.) While districts found the information from these additional tests instructionally useful, they asked why they had to conduct what was, in effect, a parallel evaluation. That is, for the reasons suggested above, they felt they should use a "respectable" norm-referenced test for external reporting purposes; given the limitations of the information provided by such tests, however, they felt at the same time that they had to resort to other devices for locally useful information.

The question raised by the evaluators was as follows: if such district-level efforts are necessary to produce formative data for district purposes, cannot these efforts also be used to satisfy external (summative) requirements? They asked this question even though they were aware that federal requirements impose no particular kind of test; perhaps they (or their superiors) continue to believe that anything other than a standardized test is unacceptable.

This situation created a double dilemma. On the one hand, the evaluators realized that, to be locally useful, the evaluation should provide different types of information for different groups of users and that such an effort takes time: time to identify the needs and questions of various potential uses, time to develop or select appropriate tests or design other data collection procedures, time to win user support for the evaluation. On the other hand, the felt need to run a separate evaluation for external purposes also takes time, time that might be better spent addressing local questions and needs.

Finally, while some districts were attempting to increase their evaluation's local relevance, the evaluators stated that they had a hard time convincing other staff, such as resource specialists and teachers, to become involved in the conduct of the evaluation. Because of what they knew or believed about previous evaluations, personnel were hesitant about raising their own evaluation questions, reluctant to participate in the process of devising ways to answer them, and unwilling to believe that the evaluator would want to help them in the task of carrying out their day-to-day responsibilities.

In essence, then, then evaluators we interviewed are describing how some potential evaluation users, the kinds of people whose support will be needed in order for the superintendent to be able to use evaluation to help manage his or her district's operations, may act with respect to the evaluation, its conduct, and its uses. They suggest some of the ways the factors we introduced earlier may interact to affect evaluation use. They suggest some likely factor patterns that any administrator will need to consider as he or she begins the task of organizing for evaluation use.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZING TO PROMOTE USE

Figure 2, which is excerpted from the handbook we described earlier (Alkin et al, 1985, in press), places the factors that we believe are central to use in most evaluation contexts into a pattern which will facilitate organizing for use. In this pattern the factors are grouped to reflect stages in the process of planning for and conducting an evaluation to maximize its use potential.

The factors and their potential influence on use should be considered from the standpoint of the intended users/uses, gathering information that will help the evaluator focus on these users/uses, and gathering information that will help the administrator-organizer ensure that factors in the setting do not impede that focus.

The administrator-organizer may want the evaluation to provide information that he or she, and other potential users, can apply to one or several decision concerns -- broad monitoring issues, and/or student or program decisions, and/or planning and policy needs. The major tasks, then, are to decide on the users/uses on which the evaluation should focus,

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FIGURE 2:

Factor Pattern For Evaluation Use

A. Setting the Stage

- Pre-existing evaluation bounds
- User identity
- Program characteristics
- Intra-organizational features
- External features

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B. Identifying/Organizing the Participants

- User interest in evaluation
- User commitment to use
- Evaluator characteristics
  - background/identity
  - commitment to use
  - willingness to involve user in evaluation
  - choice of role
  - political sensitivity
  - credibility
- Evaluation procedures—plan
- User professional style(s)

↓
↓

C. Operationalizing the Interactive Process

- Evaluation procedures—execution
- Substance of evaluation information
- Evaluator commitment to use
- Information dialogue—formative
- User information processing preferences

↓
↓

D. Adding the Finishing Touches

- Evaluation reporting
- Evaluator characteristics (selected)
- Information dialogue—summative
- User commitment to use

↓↓

Excerpted from Alkin et al. Organizing for Evaluation Use: A Handbook for Administrators. Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, 1983.

asking questions in light of the situational factors that might influence use, and using the answers to these questions to help guide both the evaluation process and the administrative tactics devised to help ensure that the evaluation stays on target.

The administrator who assumes the use-organizing responsibility can use the factor pattern in Figure 2 -- with any appropriate emphasis, addition, or deletion of factors given the particular context -- while he or she considers the program, its evaluation, the setting in which it takes place, and the intended uses. This consideration involves anticipating the effects that a particular evaluation direction, once taken, is likely to achieve. It consists of asking oneself a series of questions in light of the listed factors with the intention of determining how the program embodies each factor; that is, deciding whether that embodiment is likely to have a positive, neutral, or negative effect on the intended uses, and then devising strategies to strengthen or maintain positive effects while minimizing negative effects. These strategies may then be implemented by the administrator and/or the evaluator or some other potential user.

For example, assume that the superintendent in our case illustration goes through the process described above and, using the scheme suggested in Figure 2, asks him- or herself the following question about the first organizing issue -- setting the stage: "As part of the intra-organizational features, is there any perceived staff risk that might hinder my using the evaluation to plan future instructional offerings in response to changing student enrollment patterns? After due deliberation and discussion with potential staff users, the superintendent discovers that some

teachers feel that the evaluation poses a risk to them and that the degree of risk is likely to outweigh possible benefits. Other teachers either feel that the evaluation presents little or no risk or that benefits to be accrued outweigh any possible risks.

Now, this user group's reluctance to accept and apply evaluation findings is one manifestation of a two-part problem. First, their acceptance and application of information may be important to a larger decision area, one that may need to be made consensually by all users. Given the reluctance of one segment of the decision-making group to participate, it may be that the resultant decision concern is never fully resolved.

Second, those with the sense of risk may advance beyond reluctance to participate to outright attempts to convince others of potential dangers. If they are successful, then initially receptive users may later opt to remove themselves from the evaluation effort and, further, may attempt to thwart the entire effort.

In such a situation, the superintendent organizing for evaluation use would need to ask other questions in order to determine: the reason for the sense of risk on the part of one user group; whether or not that perception is justified; the extent to which the group in question may attempt to convince others of the imminent risk; the likelihood of success. He or she would then need to devise appropriate strategies given the answers to the preceding questions.

For example, it may be that the sense of risk is unjustified or has become magnified, perhaps on the basis of some previous evaluation experience. In this situation, the superintendent would need to convince the

hesitant group that this perception is unjustified so that the evaluator's credibility does not suffer and the necessary user group involvement is achieved.

To the extent that the superintendent him- or herself encounters difficulty in minimizing sense of risk, then it may be possible to enlist trusted and respected staff members from among the more receptive users to help convince their colleagues that, in this particular setting, the risk factor is unwarranted and that participation in the use process is justified and important to the larger institution.

Keeping the above potentially inhibiting factor example in mind, and the kinds of question-raising process and associated strategy formulation the superintendent considered, we will now suggest a few possible questions, and how they might be addressed, for factors in each of the four stages in the use process, as depicted in Figure 2. These questions are intended to guide administrative organizing for evaluation use, and their answers, as with those of all the factors displayed, should inform the administrator's selection of strategies to build use into the evaluation.

Setting the Stage

Setting the stage involves determining, before the evaluation planning process begins, the kinds of factor interactions likely to affect use in a given setting. While these factors may be set to some extent, they are not necessarily "givens." Note in Figure 2 that this determination considers possible effects stemming from the pre-existing evaluation bounds, the potential users identified, program characteristics, and intra-organizational and external features.

Questions that the administrator-organizer might raise here could include, for example:

- Who are the intended users of the evalution information?
- Are the pre-existing evaluation bounds such that there may be potential conflict, real or perceived, between program expectations and other requirements?
- How is the program best characterized with respect to its maturity, innovativeness, and overlap with other programs?

Now, let's narrow the focus a little and add some context before we go any further. Suppose that our district superintendent had a programmatic concern to resolve. In the district, enrollment in math classes in some high schools has been dropping off sharply in the last two or three years; in others, math enrollment is staying relatively constant, even increasing a little. Board and parental concern with students' technical literacy is on the rise. The superintendent would like the required evaluation of the math program to help explain the different enrollment patterns and discuss what might be done about it.

Who might the interested stakeholders, and hence potential evaluation users, be? At the least: the funding agency and the board; building principals, math department chairs, math teachers; parents and students; district office math specialists.

What might be some possible conflicts among these users? Should the superintendent consider this question in light of program maturity/ innovativeness to help illuminate the possibility of conflicting expectations? Very definitely. Consider the following:

- The board and the funding agency expect the district to continue reporting the math program results in terms of student scores on

the norm-referenced test that has been in use in the district for the last five years; parents are used to seeing these results discussed in the local newspaper; some parents want these scores to go up; others are asking why their children did not have to take the test.

- The superintendent, after meeting with math teachers in both reduced- and maintained/increased enrollment schools begins to get the distinct impression that the district's "math program" does not look the same across all schools. In some schools, especially those with high enrollment levels, innovativeness seems to be the defining feature. But innovativeness seems to differ in these schools. In a school or two, teachers rely heavily on tests they have developed themselves to make decisions about instruction; they treat the norm-referenced test as something that has little relevance for them. In some of the low-enrollment schools, teachers stress the importance of the norm-referenced test to their students and emphasize its content in their instruction. A few teachers in each kind of school do not fit the general pattern.
- The superintendent would like to explore these differences in the next year's program evaluation. First, he would like to have the norm-referenced test requirement waived for that year. In its place, he would like to conduct intensive observational studies of high school classroom math practice to find out if different teacher approaches to math instruction and/or math assessment might help explain different enrollment patterns.

- Will the funding agency accept this plan? Will the school board? How about teachers and parents? If the norm-referenced test cannot be waived, could it instead be administered on some sample basis fo the coming year? Might the evaluation apply and analyze the norm-referenced test and also conduct the intensive observational study? Will resources permit this?
- If the evaluation is permitted to emphasize the observational component, and discovers that a certain instructional approach seems to be more effective than others in attracting and maintaining student enrollment, how might the board react to this finding? How might teachers respond? How might it be received by the funding agency?

While questions such as these might all be considered in the initial organizing step -- setting the stage -- some of them may not be resolved until later on in the use process.

Identifying/Organizing the Participants

After setting the stage for evaluation planning has taken place, a series of questions which amplify user characteristics such as interest in the evaluation and commitment to its use, as well as questions reflecting relevant evaluator characteristics, should be raised. This process should result in the formulation of the evaluator's role and the evaluation procedures, carefully matched to users' interests, expectations, and professional styles, which will be used.

Among the questions that ought to be considered at this stage are:

- Are the intended users committed to use and, if so, is their commitment rhetorical or real?

- What do the intended users expect from the evaluation; are these expectations likely to affect their desire or ability to apply information?
- What would be the most appropriate role for the evaluator to take with respect to the program, and will the evaluator be willing and able to assume this role?
- What kind of evaluation procedures will provide the best match with users' professional styles?

Let's pause for a contextual breather again. Continuing the superintendent's scenario, what are some of the issues of concern in this second organizing stage?

Let's start by thinking about the evaluator for a moment. Though a highly-skilled professional, is there anything in his or her personal comportment that would cause anxiety among teachers whose classrooms were being observed? If so, would the evaluator accept a carefully phrased suggestion about classroom entry?

Now let's take up a possible politico/methodological problem. Let's assume the observational component was sanctioned by the funding agency. Let's also assume that the district needs all the resources it can get to continue its math offerings. Let's also assume that a well-defined classroom practice did seem to account for student interest in math. Should the superintendent recommend that this particular approach implemented district-wide, is it likely that the agency, although they sanctioned the observational study, would find its results to be credible? Is it possible that their understanding of observational data would affect their refunding decision? Would the board's reaction to the superintendent's recommendation be influenced by their financial concerns? How might teachers whose practice will be affected respond to the recommended change?

These kinds of questions need to be resolved before evaluation procedures are selected and put into operation.

Operationalizing the Interactive Process

Up to this point, the administrator-organizer has been anticipating future evaluation actions and effects; in this third stage the carefully planned evaluation procedures are put into effect. The central factor in this group, execution of evaluation procedures, will temper all other factors grouped here.

Among the questions that should be considered are:

- What is the most effective data-collection schedule, and are there any possible impediments to this schedule?
- Do any of the proposed procedures require any special arrangements and, if so, with whom?
- For each intended user, what particular kinds of information and in what kinds of format will be deemed relevant?
- What kinds of dialogue, via what techniques, will best match users' routine information processing styles?

While the evaluation process is underway, the superintendent in our scenario, or any other organizer, would constantly monitor the process. He or she would ensure that the evaluation is proceeding in light of how previously raised questions were answered; determine if any unanticipated factor influence is beginning to emerge; determine if an expected influence is less than anticipated, and if resources might be safely shifted to another factor of concern.

Adding the Finishing Touches

This activity is the final phase in maximizing the potential for evaluation use. The group of factors of interest here represents that

point in the evaluation process where most, or all, of the evaluation information has actually been collected. That information must now be communicated in such a way that the designated users will actually apply the information.

Among the questions the administrator-organizer should consider here are:

- What combination of written and oral reporting will most enhance use of information?
- At what time(s) should these reports be provided?
- After the reports are provided, will any final arguments be needed to convince users to act on the information?

Finally, note that the answers arrived at in any one stage will influence questions and organizing strategies stemming from a subsequent stage. Further, the process is cyclical and permits specifications proposed at an earlier stage to be modified (e.g., stressing/de-emphasizing one of the evaluation questions) in light of subsequent planning, conduct, and emerging receptivity toward the evaluation and its use.

CONCLUSION

We have suggested here that evaluation can serve a variety of educational management questions and outlined some of the question areas. We have stressed that an administrator's ability to use evaluation as a management tool depends not only upon his or her own perception of evaluation but also on the perceptions of other potential evaluation users in the system. Evaluation's contribution as a management tool is affected by the degree to which evaluation comes to be accepted and used throughout the various levels of the system.

Research has uncovered a variety of factors influencing an evaluation's use potential. These factors reflect human considerations -- such as people's attitudes toward and expectations for the evaluation; context considerations -- such as an evaluation's requirements within a particular setting; and evaluation considerations -- such as procedures used and means of communicating information. The research demonstrates that an evaluation's use potential, and therefore its application as a management tool, can be greatly enhanced if someone takes responsibility for organizing the evaluation to meet specified needs, for particular users, in light of the factors operating in the given setting. The research also suggests that a program-level administrator is in the most strategic position to assume this responsibility.

It seems evident that administrators and evaluators must come to know more about each other's operational needs and viewpoints. To the extent that administrators and evaluators share responsibility for setting an evaluation's foci and purposes, and ensure that the evaluation addresses these purposes, the evaluation's decision-making power and relevance are increased.

When a program evaluation is being considered, therefore, the administrator needs to decide on its various audiences, determine their questions and information needs, and anticipate the uses they are likely to make of the information. At the same time, the administrator needs to consider the factors existing in the given setting that are likely to influence these uses. The framework we suggest can be applied to organize the evaluation so as to have a high potential for meeting the intended uses in light of various factor influences.

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